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CONSIDERATIONS
Upon the BILL
FOR
Better Diſcovery of CLIPPERS,
Humbly Propoſed by the
Goldſmiths Company.

THE Manufacturing of *Silver* employs and maintains many Thouſands of Families, whoſe Subſiſtence wholly depends thereupon; and if this Bill paſs as now penned, it will not only diſcourage, but ruine the *Handicrafts-men* concerned in this Trade. It is therefore humbly hoped that the ſame may be altered for the better Attainment of its End, *viz. The Suppreſſion of Clippers*, and yet preſerve the Trade of *Silverſmiths*.

It is notoriouſly manifeſt that there are evil Practices in private and obſcure places, in manner as the Bill ſuggeſts, which the Petitioners pray may be redreſſed, and are ready and willing to give all imaginable Aſſiſtance, and their utmoſt Endeavours for the *Suppreſſion* thereof.

But they do humbly ſuppoſe, That,

I. The rendring it Criminal, and ſo very penal, to buy any *Molten Silver* (except *Foreign Bullion*) is, in Fact, to put a final Stop to the *Silver Manufacture*, becauſe one *Goldſmith* buys *Molten Silver* of another, as his Occaſions require, and muſt of neceſſity do ſo or forbear to Work. And after *Foreign Bullion* or *Engliſh Plate* is melted, the beſt Artiſt in the World cannot diſcover whether it is *Foreign Bullion* or *Stolen Plate* or *Clippings*; and great part of the *Foreign Bullion* is never melted, and has no Mark, and if ſome marked, yet both are uſeleſs here in Trade until melted, and when molten, they, as well as all other *Silver* that was lawfully melted, are liable to be ſeized by this Act, and the Buyers and Sellers thereby expoſed to the Penalties of the ſame. Beſides, no

melted,

melted Silver (tho deſigned for the *Mint*) can be carried thither, but it will be liable to be ſeized by this Act.

II. The large Subjection of the Houſes of *Goldſmiths*, *Merchants* and others, to frequent Entries, Searches and Breaches, not only of *Shops*, but of *Cheſts*, *Trunks* and *Boxes*, *&c.* will deſtroy the Security which the Antient Laws allow to every Man's Houſe; becauſe it will expoſe them to every trivial Suſpicion (tho not upon Oath, or any Reaſon ſufficient be given for the Suſpicion) whereas the Laws already in force are ſufficient, upon good Cauſe: This may prove inconvenient to all Perſons of Quality, who, during their Abſence out of Town, intruſt their *Plate*, *Jewels*, *&c.* with the *Goldſmiths*, to have all broken up and ranſacked upon any Suſpicion that Malice can ſuggeſt. It will prevent all Conveyance of *Plate* or other *Silver* to *London* from *Briſtol*, *Cheſter*, *Exeter*, *&c.* It will expoſe *Carriers* and their Employers to miſerable Inconveniencies, by impowering of *Searchers* to break open Packs, and conſequently to expoſe them, by Notice, to the Violence of Robbers, which now is ſafely becauſe ſecretly conveyed. And it's well known that the grand Grievance of the *Aulnage* and *Hearth Money*, hath been from ſuch Breaches and Searches; and under Colour of Warrants for it, as hath been pretended, many Houſes rifled and robbed, and Burglary committed.

III. That nothing ſhall be deemed *Foreign Bullion* but what hath the Mark ſet on it at the *Cuſtom-Houſe*, upon the Importation of it. This is impracticable and unreaſonable, with humble ſubmiſſion; for that there was never any ſuch Cuſtom or Practice uſed here, to Mark or Enter what *Bullion* is Imported, nor is the ſame in uſe in any other Countrey. It hath been the wiſdom of all Nations to encourage the Importation of *Bullion*, but this will not only diſcountenance, but intirely prevent it: For to condemn it, if no Mark be thereon when Imported, is to ſubject all Importers to the penalties of this Act, and to enjoyn Marks thereon, is to ſubject the Perſons who bring it, or are concerned therein, to the Penal Laws of the Countreys from whence it is brought, by having their Ships and Goods, upon return to *Spain*, confiſcated, and the Maſter of the Veſſel to incur the Penalty of Death. A Bar Mark'd (before it can be uſed by the *Silver-Smith*) muſt be ſevered into divers pieces, one of which only can be ſafe from ſeizure and penalty, all the other pieces are ſubject by this Bill to the pains inflicted thereby, and the laſt buyer of any

Parcel

Parcel unmark'd (tho never ſo honeſt) is liable to be Ruined by this Act; for he not only incurrs the expreſs and particular Forfeiture of the Commodities, but any Fine the Court thinks fit to impoſe, tho the ſame be 40000 *l.* more or leſs, and every little Corporation Seſſions is to have this Authority by Act of Parliament.

'Tis preſum'd, the original Deſign of the proſecutors of this Bill, was only to procure to themſelves the Offices of *Searchers*, but now being ſenſible of the groſs Miſchiefs conſequent upon this Bill, they do hope for the Erection of a *General Office* to melt Silver, in which they themſelves may have better Employments.

But to manifeſt ſuch their Project is to Ruin the Trade, it will be made to appear, that in making of Silver-work the Artiſt hath occaſion to melt it three or four times after the firſt, and the ſame muſt be molten into ſeveral parcels for ſeveral Works, and all their Cuttings muſt be melted over again, and in melting the waſte is conſiderable, which the Proſecutors hope for to themſelves; for in a *General Office* the ſame can never be recovered to the *Silver-Smith*; and in a *General Office* greater waſt is probable to enſue than when the Proprietor takes care of it himſelf, and what is made he finds again in his Sweep. Beſides, at ſuch an Office the ſame is impracticable for the Service of the occaſions of all the Trade at once, abundance of which may require expedition at the ſame time.

However the Petitioners being as deſirous of a diſcovery and diſcouragement of *Clippers* as any perſons whatſoever, are willing, and pray, that it may be Enacted,

That no Man may Melt but who ſhall give Security againſt melting of Clippings, *or any* molten Silver *not bought in open Shop; That all* Melting Places *may be Regiſtred and Entered in ſome Book to be kept by the* Wardens *of the Company of* Goldſmiths, *who have great Truſt repoſed in them by divers Acts of Parliament; Or that ſuch other proviſion may be made againſt the Miſchiefs intended to be ſuppreſſed by this Act, as are made againſt* Private Printing Preſſes; *or otherwiſe, as to your Lordſhips Wiſdom ſhall ſeem moſt meet.*

The *Goldſmiths* Obſervations upon the Bill for better Diſcovery of *Clippers*.